



Planning Modernization

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

Planning Modernization

Planning Modernization is a central component of the Corps' Civil Works Transformation efforts.

The planning process is the first step for Civil Works project development at the Corps, where Civil Works projects are formulated, evaluated, and recommended for implementation. While the foundation of the process is strong and works, the practice of the process has become unwieldy, expensive, and time consuming. This is problematic for our nonfederal sponsors, the taxpayers, and for decision-makers within the Corps of Engineers.

Improving Planning Program delivery and accountability is the top performance priority in Planning Modernization. Deliberate management of the planning study portfolio is necessary to bring studies to completion. Within the active portfolio, planning project delivery is improved by ensuring the feasibility studies process is based on enabling effective decisions while deliberately acknowledging and incorporating uncertainty.

The Corps of Engineers is committed to conducting rigorous studies that invest time and resources in problem solving, not checking a box. Our feasibility studies will be focused on timely and appropriate decision-making, rather than spending inordinate amounts of resources on tasks that may not lead to better Federal investment decisions.

Improved program delivery will be supported by the other goals of Planning Modernization: a sustainable National & Regional Planning operational and organization model so that the best resources are available to conduct studies; improving planner knowledge and experience; and modernizing Planning guidance and processes.

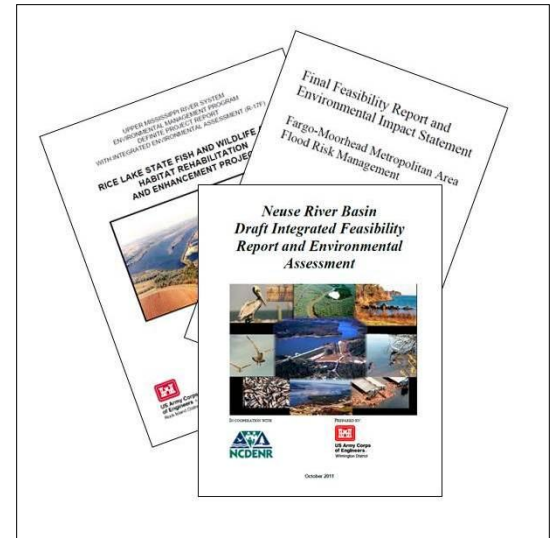
Portfolio Management

In FY2012, the Corps began review of over 600 feasibility studies in the portfolio in order to reclassify studies with limited likelihood of success to inactive and focus available funding for the most credible and viable projects for Congressional authorization.

Active studies are being examined through a process that reviews study progress, evaluates the likelihood of Federal interest and study scope, and makes a determination as to whether the study should continue as is, be re-scoped, or terminated.

Any studies that did not receive funding in FY2010, FY2011 and FY2012, or are not in the FY2013 President's Budget will be moved to inactive status unless the Major Subordinate Command (MSC) provides a detailed justification why it should not be inactive. Studies that have no viable sponsor, limited or no funding, and little likelihood of Federal interest will likely be terminated.

In addition, MG Walsh, the Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations, has directed the Corps to complete all (new) feasibility studies with a target of 18 months - but no more than three years, at a cost of no more than \$3 million, and of a "reasonable" report size.



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<http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/>

The 254 current active studies in the Corps' planning portfolio will be executed with a focus on decision-making earlier in the study process, using a progressive and iterative planning process to address key areas of uncertainty. Each Project Delivery Team (PDT) will engage representatives from the District, Division, and Headquarters as needed to identify and resolve issues early. These principles are the "SMART Planning" principles that underlie the transformation of the feasibility study process.

SMART Planning

Although the process is similar, the execution of feasibility studies is changing. This challenge will be met with the engagement of the breadth and depth of Corps experience.

- Districts will be responsible for executing studies and district staff will form the heart of the Project Delivery Team. *However, a coordinated USACE District, Division, and Headquarters Vertical Team will be deployed throughout the project development process in a One-Corps approach to identify and resolve policy, technical, and legal issues early in the process.*
- A full array of alternatives will be considered and evaluated. *Studies will first focus on a fair and credible comparison of alternatives, as required by NEPA. Once a plan is tentatively selected, additional detailed analysis and design will be conducted to further reduce uncertainty in costs, benefits, and impacts.*
- Final feasibility studies will have adequate level of detail required by law and regulation for a Chief's Report and recommendation to Congress for an authorized project. *However, the approach to level of detail, data collection, and models throughout the process must be based on what is necessary to conduct and deliver that feasibility study. The expense and time of collecting more data, developing a new model, or analyzing multiple alternatives to a high level of detail must be justified, rather than assumed.*

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| SMART Planning is: | |
| S | Specific |
| M | Measurable |
| A | Attainable |
| R | Risk Informed |
| T | Timely |

Laying the Groundwork in FY12

The National Pilot Program, initiated in FY2012, provided on-the-ground testing of application of the principles of SMART Planning. Studies which had been slowly progressing with incremental funding and strained resources benefited from an engaged and active Vertical Team. Tools that will assist study teams in making decisions on the appropriate level of detail necessary to conduct and deliver the feasibility study, including collaborative planning charettes (intensive workshops), the risk register to document and communicate areas of uncertainty in the study and project, and decision management plans that clearly identify the path to study completion have been developed based on the experiences and input of the national pilots.

Looking Forward (FY13 and beyond)

Active feasibility studies which do not meet the guidelines of completion within 3 years and \$3 million will be critically examined through the lens of the SMART Planning principles and rescoped with a clear path to study completion. Through 2013, all active feasibility studies not scheduled for completion in FY2013 or 2014, both new studies and those underway, will be transitioning to the SMART Planning process and decision-based milestones.

For More Information

For more information on processes and tools for improving feasibility study delivery through the implementation of SMART Planning principles, please see the Corps' Planning Toolbox at www.corpsplanning.us.